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SUBJECT: NURISTAN: IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Nuristan's capacity for governance continues to grow. Physical construction and institutional development have led to more effective government. Security problems have increased with the spring thaw. A "security shura" in the most problematic district, Kamdesh, is working to convince insurgents to stop fighting. Governor Tamim wants to create a similar body in Waigal District. Roads and power are the focus of infrastructure projects. Business development activities have met with enthusiasm in the province. End Summary.

Governance

¶2. (SBU) The primary task for Nuristan's government is construction, both physical and institutional. Parun, the new provincial capital, has added several new buildings in the past year, although most are incomplete. The PRT and the provincial government plan to construct offices for ministerial line directors. However, there is still no housing.

¶3. (SBU) Governor Tamim remains the driving force behind Nuristan's political development. He has pressed for staffing and has worked to make officials more effective. Notably, with the Governor's encouragement and support, the District Administrator of Do-Ab district has become very active in the past half-year, visiting the PRT several times to coordinate development strategies in Do-Ab. The Governor addressed disputes over the leadership of Kamdesh District, agreeing to recommend the replacement of the current administrator, Enayatullah, with former administrator Gul Mohammad. New deployments of police and staff to Mandol District have energized District Administrator Ataullah, who had been a non-factor.

¶4. (SBU) USAID's capacity-building programs have also improved government effectiveness. Training through Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) programs is having an impact both in making officials more effective and in fostering a sense of provincial unity.

Security

¶5. (SBU) The Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO) continues to advise NGOs against operating in Nuristan. The end of winter has brought an increase in hostile activity. Kamdesh, especially, has been the scene of frequent contact. In Do-Ab, tensions remain after a major operation by Afghan and coalition forces. The ambush of a PRT mission in northwest Nurgram District indicates that area is relatively insecure. Insurgents have moved with relative ease in Do-Ab, lower Mandol, and even Parun.

¶6. (SBU) Governor Tamim has sponsored a "100-Man" security shura in Kamdesh, where elders are trying to convince their relatives to stop fighting coalition forces. The Governor is attempting a similar effort in Waigal District. Bargimatal is peaceful and pro-government. However, instability in Kamdesh, to the south, makes travel on the only road to the rest of Afghanistan dangerous. In Wama, a strong group of elders has kept the peace.

Development

¶7. (SBU) There are significant delays in completion of the U.S. CERP-funded road network. A road from Nurgram to the Do-Ab and Mandol district centers is over a year behind schedule, because the contractor, Amerifa construction company, apparently lacks the capacity to finish the work it has undertaken. The asphalt road from Parun to Kunar province should be ready in the next few months.

¶8. (SBU) There are no plans to link Nuristan to the national power grid. The PRT will build a 1.4-megawatt power plant in Parun and an 800-kilowatt plant in Kala Gush, Nurgram. However, in most of the province, access to electricity will remain a problem. Micro-hydroelectric plants will not provide sufficient power to spark an expansion of economic activity.

¶9. (SBU) USAID's Afghan Small and Medium Enterprise Development (ASMED) program has become more active. In Nurgram, an initiative to form the "Dairy Association of Western Nuristan" to produce and market goat cheese, a traditional Nuristani product, met with enthusiasm. Initiatives are underway for similar associations in

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other sectors. Another program has successfully introduced more than 100,000 fruit and nut trees. The PRT has also found significant interest in initiatives to preserve and regenerate Nuristan's forests. The notion of a "conservation corps" to carry out such work has gained traction.

¶10. (SBU) The French NGO MADERA (Mission d'Aide au Developpement des Economies Rurales) is expanding its portfolio. The International Medical Corps (IMC) implements the European Commission's program of assistance to health clinics.

WOOD